

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend claims ~~3, 4, 8, 10, 11, 16, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 30, 36, 37, 42~~  
as follows:

--3. (Amended) [As] An assay plate as claimed in claim 1 [or 2] wherein the walls are deep enough to retain a volume of fluid following withdrawal of fluid in the space above the wells. - -

--4. (Amended) [As] An assay plate structure as claimed in [any preceding claim] claim 1 wherein the plate structure is sector-shaped with a handle at the longer arc-portion to facilitate locating the sector on a disc. - -

--7. (Amended) An assay plate structure as claimed in claim 5 [or 6] wherein the sectors and the disc include lock and key portions to allow the sectors to be snap-fitted in the correct orientation only. - -

--8. (Amended) [As] An assay plate structure as claimed in [any one of claims 1 to 4] claim 1 wherein the assay plate structure is a disc moulded in one piece with a plurality of wells. - -

--10. (Amended) An assay plate structure as claimed in [any preceding claim] claim 1 wherein the disk structure has a circumferential gutter extending around its periphery to facilitate collection of fluid withdrawal from the chamber. --

--11. (Amended) An assay plate structure as claimed in [any preceding claim] claim 1 wherein the plate structure and sector inserts are made of optically transmissive plastic. --

--16. (Amended) An assay plate structure as claimed in [claims 13, 14 or 15] claim 15 wherein the surfaces are provided by respective upper and lower plates which are spaced apart by one or more spacer walls. --

--17. (Amended) An assay plate structure as claimed in [any one of claims 13 to 16] claim 13 wherein the opening through which fluid is introduced into said space is provided through either the upper or lower surface. --

--19. (Amended) An assay plate structure as claimed in [any one of claims 13 to 18] claim 13 wherein said opening for introducing a fluid comprises a relatively small opening arranged to receive the end of a syringe or similar liquid injecting device, where the opening forms a substantially air-tight seal around said end. --

--20. (Amended) An assay plate structure as claimed in [any one of claims 13 to 19]

claim 13 wherein the underside of said upper surface of the container and the upper surface of the plate are treated to increase the hydrophobicity of such surfaces. --

--21. (Amended) An assay plate structure as claimed in [any one of claims 12 to 20] claim 12 wherein the multi-well structure is a disk which comprises upper and lower circular plates, the internal surfaces of which respectively define said upper and lower opposed surfaces. --

--23. (Amended) An assay plate structure as claimed in claim 21 [or 22] wherein the space between the upper and lower plates is subdivided, by one or more dividing walls, to provide a plurality of multi-well plates in which case each space is provided with an opening and a vent to enable each space to be independently filled. --

--25. (Amended) An assay plate structure as claimed in [any one of claims 21 to 24] claim 21 wherein at least one of the upper and lower plates forming the structure are transparent to enable optical inspection of the wells from outside the structure. --

--27. (Amended) An assay plate structure as claimed in [any one of claims 12 to 20] claim 12 wherein there is provided a disc arranged to receive a plurality of sector-shaped inserts each of which comprises a generally planar upper surface having a plurality of wells provided therein, the disk having, for each insert, a substantially planar surface arranged, in

use, to oppose said substantially planar insert surface and means for retaining the insert in position so that the respective planar surfaces are in a closely spaced arrangement to one another, and to said at least two openings. --

--29. (Amended) An assay plate structure as claimed in claim 27 [or 28] wherein the vent opening is provided at, or adjacent to, the peripheral edge of the disc. --

--30. (Amended) An assay plate structure as claimed in [claims 27 to 29] claim 27 wherein the disc comprises upper and lower circular plates separated by radially extending spacers. --

--36. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim 34 [or 35] wherein the surfaces with wells having the first fluid carrying reagents are prior prepared for loading into the structure. --

--37. (Amended) A method as claimed in [any one of claims 34 to 36] claim 34 wherein after optical assessment of the results of the assay, the automated fluid handling apparatus is used to inject and withdraw rinsing fluid a predetermined number of times from the well tray to clean the wells for receiving subsequent samples for assay. --

--42. (Amended) An assay plate structure as claimed in [any one of claims 39 to 41] claim 39 wherein a vent opening is provided for each disc segment around the periphery